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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony

Sarah Raskin

Good afternoon Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Sarah Raskin and I am a neuropsychologist and faculty member at Trinity College. My work involves research into ways to improve the lives of people with brain injury. I have had the honor of facilitating a support group through the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut for 15 years and am currently serving on the Board of Directors. I would like to submit testimony against THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS. With this budget proposal, the Governor has once again recommended elimination of funding for the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut based on the false characterization of BIAC as solely an advocacy organization.

Over the past 20 years, I have witnessed services for people with brain injury dwindle. Twenty years ago the average stay on a rehabilitation hospital unit for person after a traumatic brain injury was six months. It is now 20 days for acute care and 30 days for

rehabilitation care. The vast majority of those with injuries are sent home with no further treatment. The severity of impact of these injuries has not changed, however. These include children, veterans, mothers, fathers, and other hard-working people.

So, what happens, then, when people go home after having a brain injury? Typically they are in need of considerable services, including rehabilitation and counseling. Frequently they are unable to work and personal relationships are strained. There is nowhere for them to get information about their condition, find out what services are available, or talk to others in similar situations, nowhere other than the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut. Without the Brain Injury Alliance, I have no doubt that rates of re-hospitalization and re-injury due to unresolved physical and cognitive conditions will increase, leading to much greater costs to the state. Over these same 20 years, not surprisingly, BIAC has seen an increase of over 600% in calls to their helpline. All while they have received cuts to their operating grants and continued threats to eliminate it altogether.

The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut is the only organization in the state that provides essential services to brain injury survivors. This includes a contract through the Department of Social Services that requires BIAC to provide services through the Medicaid ABI Waiver program. I have seen first-hand many individuals for

whom the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut was their only hope, their only guide through a long and difficult process. Brain injury affects not just the body but also a person's ability to think, remember, pay attention or problem-solve. It can affect one's very personality.

I have worked with a young veteran who needed help obtaining special services when he returned to college, a young woman who needed to be retrained for return to work, and an older man trying to understand his benefits all find the help they needed from the Brain Injury Alliance. If BIAC's contract with DSS would end, DSS would no longer have the mechanism to provide these essential services required as part of the ABI Medicaid Waiver.

As veteran's recover from combat, an aging population experiences strokes and falls, and rates of motor vehicle related injuries continue to climb, the need for the services provided by the Brain Injury Alliance are apparent each and every day. Thank you.

Sincerely



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